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UNCLAS BRASILIA 000320

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JUVENILE OFFENDERS FREED DURING ASSAULT IN BRASILIA

REF: BRASILIA 02919

¶1. Summary. On January 30, armed men in Brasilia freed two teenage detainees from a vehicle and held six others hostage while en route to the CAJE juvenile detention center. The CAJE facility is often criticized for understaffing, overcrowding, and poor security. End Summary.

¶2. On the evening of January 30, a vehicle transporting six teenaged detainees to Brasilia's CAJE juvenile detention center was intercepted by three armed men. The assailants freed two detainees and held the others, as well as the CAJE security officers and the driver, hostage for one hour. The escapees had a history of violence: one has twelve prior offenses the other is under investigation for three homicides.

¶3. CAJE holds approximately 375 youths though its official capacity is 196. The facility employs 15 unarmed guards. Detainees serve a maximum of three years; violent robbery is the most common offense. Although approximately 30 adolescents leave CAJE daily, armed guards are rarely used for transports and police escorts are not required for the transport of less than twenty detainees. Critics such as Federal District Representative Erika Kokay fault CAJE for inadequate facilities, understaffing, violence, poor security, and unsatisfactory treatment of mentally ill internees.

¶4. COMMENT: Brasilia has about one-tenth the population of Sao Paulo and Rio, and has avoided some of the gravest public security crises seen in those cities, both in the streets and in the jails. Although Brasilia once seemed immune to the prison violence that plagues larger cities, it is now being forced to confront the same public security issues albeit on a much smaller scale.

DANILOVICH